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PENSACOLA MEMORABILIA

by T. T. WENTWORTH, JR.

JACKSON RECEIVES THE FLORIDAS

SINCE ANDREW JACKSON, one of America's most colorful historical figures was associated with Cantonment on several occasions and spent four weeks with his troops here in 1821 just prior to the change of flags in Pensacola, which transferred The Floridas to the United States of America, I want to recount the events in which Jackson played a part. *

On June 15, 1821, Jackson arrived in Pensacola and established his headquarters at what is now Cantonment, then one of several homes owned by Don Manuel Gonzalez.

Mrs. Jackson (Rachael), and other members of the party which arrived for the change of flags were given the use of a house which was made ready especially for them by Dr. John Brosnaham. Dr. Brosnaham had become very wealthy and owned two houses, one which he turned over to Jackson's party located at the South East corner of Palafox and Intendencia Streets. Before the arrival of Mrs. Jackson and her party Dr. Brosnaham had just purchased new furniture and had everything in readiness for the Jacksons. This home was destroyed by fire December 30, 1839 and the building which occupies the site at present was built later.

The Pensacola Historical Society has placed a Bronze Marker on the front of this building which has the following inscription:

SITE OF RESIDENCE OF
GEN. ANDREW JACKSON
WHILE GOVERNOR OF FLORIDA
1821
DESTROYED BY FIRE 1839

ERECTED BY THE
PENSACOLA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1935

* Extracts from a speech delivered before the Cantonment Rotary Club, May 29, 1957.

[46]

The Gonzalez Ranch which was chosen by General Jackson as Headquarters was known as the fifteen mile house, so called because it was fifteen miles from Pensacola. Today on these grounds are still standing great oaks under which Andrew Jackson encamped. For four weeks this ranch home of Don Manuel Gonzalez was used by Jackson as his headquarters and because of its use by Jackson and his army it was called a cantonment and thus Cantonment, Florida, got its name.

In the spacious house of Don Manuel Gonzalez and his family, Andrew met daily with the Spanish officials, preparing to make a change of the flags.

The many delays caused by the Spanish Governor distressed General Jackson. On July 10th Jackson moved his troops from Cantonment to an old camp site built by the British between 1763 and 1781 at the head of Bayou Chico. These accommodations had a large brick hospital with a fine spring of water. This spring was and is still known as Galvez Spring. This Cantonment was only two miles West of Pensacola and was a more satisfactory stopping place for awaiting the transfer which was to take place on the morning of July 17, 1821.

The ceremony of changing flags and governments took place in the Plaza Ferdinand The Seventh. The Pensacola Historical Society placed the following inscribed Bronze plaque on this spot :

IN THIS PLAZA
GENERAL ANDREW JACKSON
RECEIVED WEST FLORIDA FROM SPAIN
AND RAISED THE FLAG OF THE U. S.
July 17, 1821

TO RECALL THE FLAGS OF FIVE
NATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN RAISED IN
TURN TEN TIMES OVER PENSACOLA
SPAIN 1559-1719, 1723-1763, 1783-1821
FRANCE 1719-1723
GREAT BRITAIN 1763-1783
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 1821-1861-1863
CONFEDERATE STATES 1861 - 1863
RECALLING THAT HERE WAS THE CENTER

OF LIFE OF THE TOWN AND OF THE
PROVINCE OF WEST FLORIDA DURING THE
GREATER PART OF THE COLONIAL ERA.

ERECTED BY THE
PENSACOLA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1935

Thus Andrew Jackson became the First Territorial Governor of Florida.

The *National Intelligencer* (Washington) published a letter dated at Pensacola July 18, 1821, which included an account of the transfer ceremonies. To preserve this record, *Niles' Weekly Register* of August 25, 1821, reprinted it, from which the following is extracted.

Yesterday, after a series of delays, and disappointments, of a pace with the whole tenor of our twenty years' negotiations with Spain, the American authorities were finally and formally put in possession of this city, of the fortress of the Barrancas, and of the dominion of the Floridas.

Out of tenderness to the feelings of the Spaniards, deeply excited by the painful separation about to take place between those who go and those who remain-and who are allied not only by the ties of intimacy and friendship, contracted during a long period of a common residence in this pleasant and salubrious region, and confirmed by a community of habits and religion, as well as of lineage and language, but knitted together by the most sacred and endearing bands of consanguinity and affiance, the ceremony was conducted with very little ostentation.

The Spanish governor's guard, consisting of a full company of dismounted dragoons of the regiment of Tarragona, elegantly clad and equipped, was paraded at an early hour of the morning in front of the government house.

About 8 o'clock a battalion of the 4th regiment of U. S. Artillery, the whole under the command of Col. Brooks, of the 4th infantry, were drawn up on the public square, opposite to the Spanish guard, having marched into town from the encampment at Galvez' Spring. The usual military salute passed between them. Four companies of infantry from the American

line, under the command of Major Dinkins, of the 5th infantry, were then detached to take possession of the Barrancas, which is nearly nine miles below this city.

At 10 o'clock, the hour previously appointed, General Jackson, attended by his aides, secretary, interpreters, crossed the green, passed between the double line formed by the troops of both nations, who simultaneously saluted him by presenting arms, and entered the government house, where the formality of the transfer was soon dispatched, and the Spanish sergeant's guard at the gate was immediately relieved by an American guard. After a few minutes, Governor Jackson accompanied by Col. Callava, the late commandant, and their respective suites, left the government house and passed through the same double line of troops, to the house which the governor (Jackson) had rented for the temporary accommodation of his family.

The Spanish troops were then marched to the place of embarkation-the American flag was displayed upon the flag-staff, and grand salutes were fired by the artillery company and the U. S. ship *Hornet*, a gun being given to each state and territory of the Federal Union, not forgetting Florida, and the regimental band, and that of the *Hornet*, playing the "Star Spangled Banner" all the while. In the course of the day a number of citizens waited on the new governor to pay their respects, and offer their congratulations.

The delivery of the Barrancas was performed with a little more parade. The Spanish flag was lowered to half-mast. The American flag raised to a level with it. Both flags were, in this situation, saluted by the Spaniards. After, which, the Spanish colors were hauled down, and the American ensign hoisted. The Americans then saluted their national flag. The American troops made a fine and martial appearance, and the *Hornet* was gaily dressed.

The following article from the Progress Edition of the *Pensacola News-Journal*, October 2, 1949, is appropriate at this time:

THE OAK CROSS

Travelers along Palafox highway, about 15 miles north of Pensacola, find themselves passing through an industrial center

that was undreamed of when the News-Journal started its career. In fact, 10 years ago there were open fields and pine woods where the great St. Regis paper mills and the multiwall bag factory now stand. Where 175 homes, with churches, schools, and stores from a busy and growing community, there were the pine forests and a cross-roads, a postoffice, a railroad station, and a few scattered buildings. . . .

Gen. Andrew Jackson, during the war of 1812, encamped his troops there, and gave the name of Cantonment to the region. The house that Old Hickory used as his headquarters still stands, not far from the L. & N. railroad station. For many years it was owned by the Booth family, whose land was to become part of the mill site.

It was fortunate for the future community that the Booth family had kept intact a sizable piece of acreage essential to the project, in spite of proposals to break it up through sales of small parcels. When the deal with Charlie Booth and the other land owners involved was completed Jim Allen looked out over the quiet fields and the surrounding woodlands, the two country roads and the two railway lines. Then he turned and said: "Charlie, God made it: you held it; I found it."

ST. MICHAEL'S CEMETERY

St. Michael's cemetery was first used in 1781 as the burial grounds for Pensacola. During the twenty years prior, the British cemetery was located on Main and DeVillier streets and has long since been destroyed by the tide and elements. St. Michael's cemetery grounds were granted to the Catholic inhabitants of Pensacola on their claim of 30 arpents of land. I quote from the records :

"The Catholic inhabitants of Pensacola presented a claim for 30 Arpents of land and produced as evidence of their title papers the following original grant.

"Plat, Pensacola 7th of June 1810, Vincente Sebastian Pintado, Don Vincente Pintado, Surveyor General of West Florida.

"Pursuant to the provisions contained in the orders dated 13th day of July and 20th of August of the year 1807, issued by his Honor Don Juan Ventura Morales, Intendent general, Ad interim

and sub delegate of the Superintendency General, Judge of Royal lands and lots, in this province, in the matter of judicial proceedings. Furthered by Don Franco Caso Luzenzo, Captain of the Regiment of Infantry of 'Louisiana' and administrator of the erection of the Church Building, Parochial, Soliciting a parcel of land for a Cemetery and other purposes, the location and figure thereof being represented in the new plan of this town and which was approved by His Lordship the Governor of this town and Province, as appears by his official dispatch, dated the 13th day of August in the year 1809." (The record continues with the necessary information for the grant.)

In 1949 the legislature passed a bill designating St. Michael's cemetery a state park, subject however to proper deeds of conveyances being presented the State Board of Parks and Historic memorials without cost to the State.

Many famous people are buried in St. Michael's cemetery, among whom is Dorothy Walton, wife of George Walton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence from Georgia and mother of George Walton, Jr., First Secretary of State and Acting Governor of Florida.